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11 April 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. BISSELL

SUBJECT : Summary of USCM Operations Thru 1200 E 11 April

This is to satisfy your request for a brief memorandum concerning USCM operations to date.

1. As you know, preparations for the USCM have been going on for some weeks. Preparations commenced with the development of our Reports Control Manual, a copy of which has been furnished you. Our Operations procedures were tested during our visit to the site in mid March. This first test was on a face to face basis during which several points concerning control measures were clarified and agreed upon between Detachment "A" and Headquarters personnel. Upon return from the site we ran two communications exercises for test and practice of procedures. On the 5th and 6th of April we controlled two actual flights to further prove our procedures.

2. Detailed mission planning for the actual USCM flights began with the weather briefing Sunday a.m., 8 April. Throughout Sunday, missions were planned and weather briefings were received. Our system of control was used to both receive from and furnish necessary information to Detachment "A". At the seven o'clock weather briefing of Monday, 9 April, word was flashed to Detachment "A" to "go" on their first mission. This general pattern of briefing and dispatch of receipt of messages according to our Reports Control Manual has continued daily since. Some details of daily operations are indicated on the attached USCM Summary. (Attachment "A") Flight tracks are as indicated on the attached map. (Attachment "B")

Operations General

As an over-all comment, operations appear to be highly successful. All of our missions have met their exact take-off time to the minute with but the one exception of a one-minute and twenty-eight second delay. With one exception all our aircraft have completed their flights as briefed. The one exception is an aircraft that was forced to abort due to a fuel pump failure caused by a steel chip entering the fuel pump. This particular flight did not leave the local area and returned to base without incident.

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Reporting

Reporting procedures developed and directed in our Operational Control Manual seem to be very adequate. At the present time we would consider making only one or two insignificant changes. As far as Headquarters is concerned, we have been receiving all of the information that we feel essential to our direction of the missions. At this time we assume complete satisfaction as far as the detachment is concerned since we have received no complaints or other comment. It is hoped that we can get together with the Detachment Commander immediately after this exercise to confirm our opinions.

Weather

Generally, the weather has been less than desirable. However, it has been at least good enough to warrant dispatch of daily missions for purposes of the USCM. We have sent flights in weather somewhat marginal from a photographic standpoint. We have been fortunate in that weather from a flight safety viewpoint has not been a problem. The weather has proved to be pretty much as forecast. This is very encouraging particularly when you consider that the forecasters are required to furnish us accurate information concerning weather conditions where the margin of difference between acceptable photographic weather and non-acceptable photographic weather is very small. An over-all evaluation of the weather forecasting would indicate that it has been accurate. However, we have encountered some difficulty which caused extra planning work because of a somewhat wider than expected disparity between the longer range forecasts (36 - 46 hours) and the last weather briefing given before dispatch of the take-off message. While we had hoped for a little better continuity of weather on a forecast basis, we do not consider this serious at the present time. We have every reason to think that the people that are providing us with our forecasts will be able to do somewhat better when we get into our area of operations since these particular forecasters are specialists concerned with forecasting in that particular geographic area and are, therefore, somewhat less familiar with the vagaries of the weather here in the ZI.

Communications

Altogether communications have been excellent. We have received some messages in an unusually short time. We've also had a smattering of messages that took somewhat longer than we would like. The general comment is that communications have been acceptable. This is due in large degree to the extra effort rendered by some of the communications personnel. It seems apparent that some personnel action will be required in this area. Specific recommendations will be made after completion of the USCM.

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Equipment

Based on information contained in our reporting procedures, I conclude that photographic equipment has been operating generally somewhat better than expected. We have one account [redacted] [redacted] who observed Monday's operation), that presents a rather pessimistic view. I think any official opinion concerning the reliability of this equipment should be reserved until completion of the inspection of the film some time next week. Any conclusions reached previously could be premature.

Today's operation should complete eight missions. We intend to fly four more for a total of twelve to complete the USCM.

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Encls. (2):
1. USCM Summary
2. Map

[redacted]
Colonel, USAF
Director of Operations

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Cy 3 - Ops subj. file
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